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Castro Peddles Myths Of Cuba's Well-Being

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Fidel Castro has been telling the world the people of Cuba never had it so good, but a careful analysis of comment appearing in the Cuban press and aired by government radio, together with eyewitness accounts of refugees, tell a wholly different story.

And it's not so much the story of Communist treachery and deceit — already well documented — but the day-to-day erosion of human rights that reaches down into the home, the school and the job.

On Par With CIA

Much of the information coming to light is being assembled by the Citizens Committee for a Free Cuba whose network of sources may almost be on a par with that of the Central Intelligence Agency.

As an example, the committee monitors the Cuban radio around the clock while CIA is understood to spot check these broadcasts only a few hours during the day and night. Also, virtually every refugee questioned by the CIA on his arrival in this country is interrogated by the committee.

This documentation has made it easy to torpedo some of the popular myths Castro has been trying to sell to the outside world.

Education Compared

For instance, the myth that "today, everyone can get a good education in Cuba."

Before Castro Cuba had eight universities. Tuition in state universities was a token \$5 a month. Forty per cent of the students were given scholarships. These universities had some of the finest faculties in this hemisphere.

Now, Cuba has only three universities. Entrance requirements depend solely on whether the applicant is a member of the Communist party, the Young Communists or can prove he is not militantly anti-Castro.

Discharged Or Fled

Over 5,000 Cuban elementary and high school teachers reportedly have either been discharged for resistance or have fled. Last fall the ministry of education recruited 6,000 children as teachers. This was their qualification: "12 years of age or over and successful graduates of the sixth grade."

Cuban children who are self-taught by parents to escape regimentation and Communist indoctrination have their ration cards withheld by neighborhood informers and are not permitted to buy shoes when they are available.

For each day that a child misses school the father has one day's pay withheld. If absences continue, he loses his job and risks being sent to a concentration camp.

Blame Laid

Castro frequently lays the blame for the steadily declining agricultural production on "inexperienced young administrators" or the "brutal economic blockade."

There have been 19 government decrees to curb "popular sabotage" such as the burning of sugar cane. Decree 988 pro-

vides for summary execution within 48 hours.

Castro has had to resort to conscripting every Cuban male, between 17 and 45 to fill the labor gap. They are paid slave wages of \$7 a month in a country that has always been plagued by a surplus of labor. More than 500,000 workers were pulled off other jobs and sent to the cane fields. Forced to work Saturdays and Sundays this additional force still was unable to finish the harvest on time.

Housing Declines

Another myth is that housing is more abundant for the Cubans today due to "social progress" under communism. What are the facts?

Cuba's civilian construction industry dropped from a \$61 million private enterprise in 1958 to government investments in mid-1960 of less than \$10 million. Only 11 construction permits

for housing were issued in the last quarter of 1961. Yet Cuba has an annual average need of 20,000 new urban and 10,000 rural dwellings. Since then, 90 per cent of Cuba's concrete and wood has gone into military construction.

Center Set Up

And there is the boast that Cuban students take kindly to Communist indoctrination and follow Castro's direction unhesitatingly.

A special center has been set up to reorient the thinking of scholarship students who show a lack of discipline in their studies of Marxism-Leninism. Those who fail to change are drafted into obligatory military service. And these students range from 13 to 18 years of age.

From these accounts it can be seen how the Communist strangulation in Cuba is virtually complete.